THE AERONAUT.

No. 52. June 26. 1817.

---Let not little critics exalt themselves.
WATTS.

Little minds, whatever be their objects of consideration, and whatever their subjects of censure, uniformly betray themselves, in tiseness of remark, weakness of conception, and shallowness of observation. Folly cannot rise to discrimination, nor dulness to

candor; and sublimity of genius, vigor of intellect, and felicity of expression, will be alike unnoticed, with one era to oppose them, by those pests of society, whose employment and delight consist, in exposing casual inadvertencies, & ridiculing trifling mistakes..

Our remark may be applied to every scene in life, and to every class of men. But, in our present paper, we do not mean to be so general;- we wish to confine our observations to one particular order of beings, and that in the literary world; which, amidst its ornaments, its lights, and its beauties, has its quacks,

to sicken with their pretensions, & ito dabblers, to offend with their ignorance.

Our own country, and our own city, are, like other parts of the world, infinitely troubled with small critics. They swarm in every quarter, they infest every neighborhood. It were a vain and fruitless attempt, to endeavor to stop the course of their actions, or trie the assiduity of their exertions. Their tongues, though harmless, are incessantly active, and their hints, though disregarded, repeatedly obtruded upon public notice. The very nature of their character, precludes the possibility of their disappearance; - for

they have impudence beyond correction, and a conceit above control.

It is easy to perceive, that there are no intellectual powers too high, to escape the calumnies, & avoid the censures, of these inferior members of the commonwealth of letters. They overlook elegancies, to carp at defects, - are certain never to praise, and always sure to condemn. Misanthropy is the impulse of their slanders, and malevolence the governor of their thoughts. Without a character, to gain respect, and enforce attention, they continue their attacks, without interruption from others, and without restraint from themselves.

But ~~that~~ experience pretty generally shews, that it is best to leave them to their own reflections; for notice only adds fresh industry to their labors, and enkindles slower animosity in their bosoms. Against the efforts of genius, and the productions of talent, there will always be weapons directed, from envy of their present greatness, and fear of their future predominance. A contest, therefore, with them, for superiority, is the ignis at which they constantly aim, - it calls attention upon them, and adds fuel to the flame of their revenge. when they write, they would be answered; - disappointment

in this, is what ought to take place, for it is what they most dislike.

The folly of attention to the observations of those underlings, of whom we are speaking, will appear immediately upon the reflection, that, where honest integrity, and rising worth, to be crushed, at every feeble blow which ill-natured severity inflicts, were virtue to ~~cease~~ her pretensions, and intellect to yield her prerogative, when malice vented forth its spleen, and stupidity proclaimed its abuse, there would be no safety in society, no confidence in

our fellows, & no habitation d-
mand men. Amid the varied
scenes which every nation af-
fords, there will allways be
found some, to select the good
from the bad, to discriminate
~~good~~ purity from evil.. In this quar-
ter of the globe, we have our
profligate and our frivolous,
our foolish, and our malignant;
- but we trust that, although
such an accumulation of
hateful objects presents itself
to the view, we have still
those, whose extent of know-
ledge, and liberality of senti-
ment, will incite them, to
foster the growing flames of
our infant republic, to guard

it from the dangers of falsehood, and stamp upon its effusions the character which they alone deserve..

It is a misfortune much to be deplored, that this country, ~~coming to its youth~~, has not yet had time to arrive at that period, in which a just standard of criticism is erected, by which all may judge, and to which all may resort, for instruction, if they are ignorant, and for amusement, if they are curious.- Now, as probably will be the case for some time hence, all the information that we can obtain. of

the merits of any work of the present day, is derived from the loose opinions of a few scattered beings, whose knowledge must, of necessity, be confined within a very limited circle of men. It cannot extend itself so far, as to induce public attention, or command public reverence.

As there are very few, in the world, who are capable, or who have sufficient character, to maintain an opinion for themselves, nothing is more necessary than that, the want of which, we have just lamented. In every community, and in every form of

government, a few ~~always~~ ~~must forever~~ lead. When we are a little older, we also shall find this to be true. The power of talent, and the vigor of genius, will rear their ensign of authority, above the hand that wander beneath. In such a state of things, the minor critics have no influence to exert, for others ~~know better~~ are wiser than to acknowledge their power. Their anger is ridiculed, their vanity despised, their incubrations neglected, and their calumnies unheard..

To the happy period, when such shall be the in-

tellectual state of our country, we cannot but look forward with fond and pleasing anticipations. We long for a time, when true learning only will be reveld, and just criticism only regarded;- when solid attainments will meet with their reward, and spurious wit will sink to its level.
We die wearied with the presumptuous pretensions, and insignificant performances, of those, who would form a school of instruction on topics which they do not understand, and which they have not the modesty to learn.

But, to speak more

plainly, we would have Criticism assume her title, without violating her privileges. We would have her free, but liberal, severe but impartial, candid, but feeling. We wish her to preserve the purity of Language, without descending into minute particularity. Could this be the case, we might look for a change in our literary character, glorious, profitable, and happy.

Q.